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Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration
U.S. REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM NEWS

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Secretary of State Colin Powell Leads FY 2004 Consultations

On October 1, Secretary of State Colin Powell led an Administration team, including representatives of the Departments of State, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services, through consultations with members of the House Judiciary Committee on the President's proposal for the FY 2004 Refugee Admissions Program. Committee Chair Sensenbrenner (R-WI) was joined by Representatives Conyers (D-MI), Hostetler (R-IN) and Jackson-Lee (D-TX). On October 15, Senators Chambliss (R-GA) and Kennedy (D-MA) met with the Secretary and other Administration officials at the Department of State to discuss the program. Issues discussed ranged from the impact of enhanced security measures in the program post-September 11 to efforts to further extend the reach of the program around the world to those most in need of resettlement in the United States.

On October 21, the President authorized the admission of up to 50,000 refugees



allocated among regions (Africa - 25,000, East Asia - 6,500, Europe and Central Asia - 13,000, Latin America and the Caribbean - 3,500 and Near East/South Asia - 2,000) and an additional 20,000 unallocated numbers to be used if caseloads become available.

FY 2003 ADMISSIONS STATISTICS

Region	FY 2003 Regional Ceiling	Total Arrivals in FY 2003	FY 2004 Regional Ceiling
Africa	20,000	10,717	25,000
East Asia	4,000	1,724	6,500
Europe & Central Asia	16,500	11,269	13,000
Latin America & Caribbean	2,500	452	3,500
Near East & South Asia	7,000	4,293	2,000
Unallocated Reserve	20,000	0	20,000
TOTAL	70,000	28,455	70,000

Source: Refugee Processing Center, Rosslyn, VA

Revised Family Reunification Program for FY 2004

In FY 2004, the United States Refugee Program (USRP) will implement an expanded, revised family reunification category that broadens access to the resettlement program to a larger group of nationalities while at the same time addressing identified patterns of fraud and misrepresentation. Eligibility for Priority Three (P-3) processing will be expanded from four to nine nationalities, while the immigration statuses of “anchor relatives” eligible to file Affidavits of Relationship (AOR) and the qualifying relationships eligible to access the program will be narrowed.

During FY 2004, eligibility for a P-3 refugee interview will be extended to nationals of certain countries who are the spouses, unmarried children under the age of 21 or parents of persons admitted to the United States as refugees or asylees, or those who have adjusted or naturalized from one of those statuses. In FY 2004, P-3 eligible nationalities are: Burma, Burundi, Colombia, Congo (Brazzaville), Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iran, Liberia, Somalia and Sudan. Effective immediately, the Refugee Processing Center (RPC) will accept AOR's from PRM-funded voluntary agencies meeting the above criteria for these nationalities.

AORs filed by anchor relatives according to FY 2003 eligibility criteria that no longer meet the revised criteria for FY 2004 will be accepted for a limited period of time and must be sent by national voluntary agency headquarters to the RPC postmarked on or before December 31, 2003.

At-Risk Liberian Refugees Reach Safety

In November 2002, UNHCR requested the U.S. Government's assistance evacuating close to 9000 Liberian refugees from Cote d'Ivoire. The refugees, many of who had been living in settlements since fleeing Liberia in the early 1990s, were caught up in the middle of the Ivoirian internal conflict. Accused of working with Ivoirian rebel groups, they became subject to xenophobic attacks and forced recruitment into armed conflict. In May 2003, after seven months of diplomatic negotiations failed to find a third country in the region that was willing to accept the evacuees, PRM began exploring alternative ways that these refugees could reach safety. PRM concluded that, if the security situation in Abidjan improved to the point that officers from the Department of Homeland Security could interview there, the group could be processed for U.S. Resettlement.

A call in early May from PRM Assistant Secretary Arthur E. Dewey to U.S. Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire Arlene Render initiated the planning process for resettlement. Ambassador Render, who has been a strong advocate for the Liberian refugees, confirmed that not only was resettlement a good solution for this group, but that the security situation in Abidjan was stable enough for the officers to interview the applicants. PRM and UNHCR then swung into action to set up a "fast track" resettlement program.

Collaborating closely with the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/CIS), the Overseas Processing Entity operated by Church World Service, and the International Organization on Migration, PRM and UNHCR designed an action plan that included verification of identity and other safeguards to reduce the potential for fraud in the program. The first 1000 vulnerable refugees interviewed were from Abidjan, where they had been living in transit centers since their



Liberian refugees listening to the announcement of the resettlement program at Autoban Transit Center in Abidjan.

homes had been demolished at the start of the Ivoirian crisis nine months earlier. The other refugees are from Nicla camp, and the towns of Guiglo, San Pedro and Tabou in Western Cote d'Ivoire. In Abidjan, the Liberians live in temporary transit housing while their refugee claims are processed rapidly.

Just four months after the planning began, the hard work paid off and the first refugees arrived in the U.S. A total of 880 individuals arrived by the close of the fiscal year on September 30, 2003. Processing continues and DHS/CIS is about to begin the second of three planned circuit rides and will interview approximately 3500 at-risk Liberians in November and December 2003. The third and final circuit ride is scheduled for January 2004.

RESETTLEMENT DISCUSSIONS AT UNHCR EXCOM

Each year, the UN High Commissioner for Refugee's (UNHCR) Executive Committee (currently comprised of 64 governments) gathers in Geneva to consider the worldwide refugee situation and related issues of concern to the international community. Official Observers, including NGOs involved in refugee work, also participate. As in previous years, resettlement was one of the topics discussed during this year's UNHCR Executive Committee (EXCOM) meeting held in Geneva September 29 - October 3. The following highlights the references to refugee resettlement and discussion of UNHCR's new partnership with its NGO partners.

Increased Cooperation with NGOs

In his opening statement, High Commissioner Lubbers indicated UNHCR was adopting an entirely new approach towards its partners, including its NGO partners. While Lubbers reiterated his view that UNHCR partners better positioned to provide refugee assistance in a particular situation (either because they could do so more cost-effectively, are were better able to raise resources for the situation, etc.), might do so, Lubbers said the new relationship he envisioned was not just about resources. Lubbers said UNHCR intends to better draw on the expertise and capabilities of NGOs and look for ways for them to provide input into UNHCR's policy-making, as well as in assessing needs, setting objectives, and preparing budgets at the country level. Governments expressed support for this enhanced partnership.

Refugee Resettlement Discussions

Director of International Protection Erika Feller reviewed UNHCR's efforts to increase refugee resettlement opportunities. UNHCR has developed a group methodology for the identification and profiling of refugee groups under resettlement consideration. UNHCR has also established two refugee-processing hubs in Africa (Accra and Nairobi) and is working on a Global Resettlement Strategy for 2004. Feller noted that funding (from the United States) had made this progress possible.

Many governments expressed support for UNHCR's increased resettlement capacity. PRM DAS McKinley said the U.S. remains committed to resettlement. The Danish rep expressed support for group resettlement. Canada said it would host discussions, through UNHCR's Convention Plus initiative, on the strategic use of resettlement, but others cautioned that this should not jeopardize individual resettlement opportunities in the case of protection needs.

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Visit To Utica Brings Back Good Memories and Hope For the Future

PRM's Assistant Secretary Arthur E. Dewey shared fond memories of previous visits to Utica, New York, the site of the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees (MVRC). On this occasion, Assistant Secretary Dewey discussed his hopes for future refugee resettlement to the area with nearly 150 city officials, local business leaders and other community members at the first annual fundraiser for the Center. The festive event, which took place on October 16th, celebrated both the support for refugee resettlement demonstrated by the community and the many gifts that refugees have brought to the Utica area. As keynote speaker, Assistant Secretary Dewey stressed the welcoming environment that cities like Utica can provide to people from around the world who have fled persecution. He also emphasized that in Utica refugees provide an excellent example of how they can contribute to urban renewal even in times of economic down-turn. Refugees from Bosnia make up nearly 10 percent of the 60,000 total population of Utica. Over the last two decades, the MVRC has resettled to the area more than 10,000 refugees from 27 countries and assisted them in becoming active members of the Utica Community.

Assistant Secretary Dewey was able to tour the Corn Hill Area of Utica where he saw firsthand refugees are greatly contributing to the urban renewal. In 1970s and 1980s this area had experienced increased crime and drug activity and the deterioration of many of



On a visit to Utica, New York, Assistant Secretary Dewey meets with MVRC staff many of whom had been refugees themselves.

Utica's historic homes built in the early part of the century.

Assistant Secretary Dewey was impressed by the vast improvements that had taken place in recent years as a result of refugees buying and renovating homes and establishing businesses in the neighborhood. He also enjoyed meeting two newly-arrived Somali Bantu families who were quickly adjusting to their new lives in Utica. This was the first time Mr. Dewey, as Assistant Secretary of State, has had the opportunity to visit an affiliate resettlement office and meet with refugee families in their new homes. He was energized by the field experience and moved by the courage and positive attitude demonstrated by the family members that he visited.

A View of Kakuma

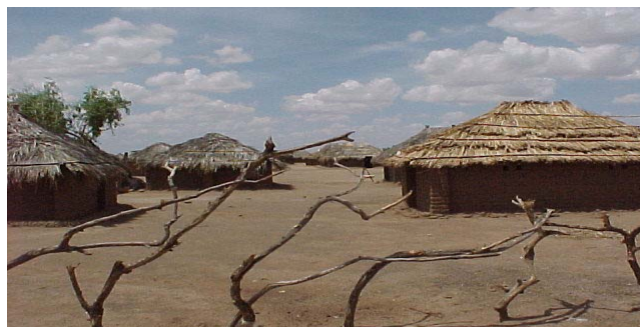
I recently traveled as part of a 6-member team of Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Immigration Officers to Kenya for a 2-month refugee processing detail. Five of those weeks were spent in Kakuma camp, located near the border with Sudan, interviewing mostly Somali Bantu refugees.

After a week of training and orientation in Nairobi, the team set off in a chartered cargo plane for Kakuma. Balancing our luggage at our feet, from the windows we watched the terrain change from cool green to dusty brown. After hearing so much about the camp and receiving so many different instructions and tips on how to survive there, we were anxious to arrive. Each team member brought what s/he considered to be survival aides: one officer brought his guitar; another had a bottle of hot sauce; others carried a coffee pot, enough protein bars for every meal, and a couple of cans of sardines. My own suitcase was loaded with books. We believed ourselves to be prepared, and for the most part we were.

Team members took turns sitting in the backseat on the long dusty drive from the residential UNHCR compound to the interview site where we could best experience the bounces of an 11 km rough road in the smallest amount of space. This bumpy beginning and end to each workday offered a wonderful view of the landscape dotted with local Turkana herding their sheep and goats, and camels ambling across the scenery.

The Bantu population in the Kakuma refugee camp is very young. IOM representatives explained to us that 50% of the Kakuma Bantus are under the age of 10 years. A family might consist of a single person or might be comprised of two parents, their eight children, two nephews, and a grandmother. Six families per day were interviewed by each Immigration Officer. Most of the refugees recounted histories of first discrimination, then persecution suffered in the early 1990s, followed by flight from Somalia.

During non-working hours entertainment options were few. There were two televisions on the compound for public viewing. While sitting under African skies, we watched coverage of Hurricane Isabel doing her damage along the east coast. There were also pool and ping-pong tables with readily available playing partners. We bought beer, soft drinks, and bottled water at a little "bar." The group members also cared for a local pet dik-dik (a deer type creature that one of the UNHCR workers bought from a refugee who had dinner designs), hand-fed



Kakuma Refugee Camp

rabbits who played in the clearing by our rooms, and used the exercise track around the compound. The main form of entertainment was just hanging out with each other. Several of the officers felt great about how relaxing it was to just be able to socialize in the evenings without normal obligations and interruptions.

One Sunday, the DHS team took a driving tour of the camp. The IOM security officer had arranged for us to stop and look at some local handicrafts. Our group was not prepared for what we found on this tour.

When we arrived at the Bantu part of the camp, we were greeted formally by Somali Bantu leaders who showed us a chalkboard listing entertainment prepared in our honor. For the next hour or so, the DHS team watched a series of local dances and performances by different Bantu groups. We were invited to participate in the dances and there were several songs that were especially about our little DHS group. At the close of the ceremonies, the team members were sweaty and covered with dust, but it was plain to see that each was moved by the outpouring of welcome. IOM representatives explained that the Bantus had been long awaiting the return of U.S. immigration officers to resume adjudications, and this was a display of their welcome. Having already heard some of the refugees recount their painful history, it was meaningful for us to see them and share with them such a joyful celebration.

Now back at home, we continue to wonder about the Bantus we interviewed and wish them well. There were times I would focus on a particular refugee, usually a child, and wonder: Where will she be in a year's time? Will she like the United States? Will she even remember being in Kakuma? Though there for only a short time, I certainly will.

Mary Margaret Stone, DHS Team Leader/TDY Aug-Oct 03